

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

FOR

**ESCONDIDO CHARTER
HIGH SCHOOL**

1868 East Valley Parkway

Escondido, CA 92027

Escondido Charter School District

February 26-28, 2007

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Chapter I

Student/Community Profile

Escondido Charter High School (ECHS) was established in 1996 as it's own Local Education Agency known as Escondido Charter School District. The school is a four-year comprehensive high school located in the community of Escondido. The school operates two different instructional programs, the Traditional Classroom Program (TCP) and the Individualized Learning Program (ILP), and has an enrollment of 902 students for the 2006-2007 school year. Escondido Charter High School also operates a satellite site for 120 students 10 miles away in the city of San Marcos. The school is a new facility that is clean, modern and safe with a staff of 48 teachers, 6 administrator support staff and 16 classified employees. The ethnic composition of the student body is 75% white, 16% Hispanic, 2% African American, 1% Asian, 2% Filipino and 1% American Indian or Alaska Native. Approximately 3% of students provided a multiple response or none at all. This ethnic distribution has remained consistent over the past several years.

Escondido Charter High School does not accept Title I funding or provide government subsidized lunch programs or other programs predicated on income data. The school does attempt to collect data and has determined that approximately 7% of students qualified for AFDC; as of October 31, 2006, 26 students qualified for free lunch and 36 students qualified for reduced price lunch. The school currently has no English Language Learners. The Escondido Union High School District, the sponsoring district for special education purposes, takes all special education funding and in return provides services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). ECHS does provide annual IEP meetings, speech and language instruction and consultation and monitoring services by a special education teacher and program specialist. Due to the small size of ECHS there is not a separate GATE program.

The mobility rate for the Traditional Classroom Program (TCP) was approximately 10% for the 2004-2005 school year with the majority of students either transferring to the Individualized Learning Program (14 students) or transferring to other school districts (13 students). The mobility rate for the Individualized Learning Program (ILP) was 36%. ECHS attributes this to the format of the program with its independent study approach. Approximately 52% of the ECHS staff has been teaching for an average of 9.8 years. Eight percent of the credentialed staff have more that 20 years of teaching experience and 37% of the staff hold a Master's Degree or higher. All teachers are credentialed.

Chapter II

Student Performance Data

Escondido Charter High School use pre and post testing in both the Individualized Learning Program (ILP) and the Traditional Classrooms Programs (TCP) Data for each program is charted as follows:

ILP Pre Test and Post Test Score Comparisons for 2003-2004

Subject	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Percent Increase
American Government	64%	79%	15%
Economics	67%	79%	12%
Geography	60%	78%	18%
Health	69%	79%	10%
Science-Earth	69%	81%	12%
Science-Life	54%	75%	21%
U.S. History	54%	76%	22%
World History	53%	73%	20%

TCP Pre Test and Post Test Score Comparisons for 2003-2004

Subject	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	Percent Increase
American Government	67%	85%	18%
Economics	70%	84%	14%
Geography	60%	85%	25%
Health	69%	87%	18%
Physical Science	33%	89%	56%
U.S. History	69%	81%	12%
World History	60%	83%	23%

Students' average gains for all subjects in ILP were 16% and in TCP the average gains in all subjects were 24%. It should be noted that due to problems the school is seeking a new data delivery system in order to access more recent information.

California Standards Test (CST) scores for 2006 showed 86.9% of students proficient or above in English Language Arts at all grade levels. Math scores showed 77% of students proficient or above at all grade levels. The school has consistently met all criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) from 2004 through 2006. The chart below represents CST scores for 2005-2006 broken out by groups.

<u>Group</u>	Percent of Students Scoring at Proficient or Advanced			
	English-Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	History-Social Science
African American	76	38	*	*
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	*	*	*
Asian	87	67	*	*
Filipino	*	*	*	*
Hispanic or Latino	48	38	31	33
Pacific Islander	*	*	*	*
White (Not Hispanic)	68	43	51	52
Male	65	46	47	53
Female	67	41	51	47
Economically Disadvantaged	43	27	*	21
English Learners	*	*		
Students with Disabilities	38	*	*	*
Students Receiving Migrant Education Services				

*Denotes fewer than 10 students were tested and scores were not reported. A blank space means that no students in that group took the test.

The CST scores reflect a 20-point gap between Hispanic/Latino students (48%) and white students (68%) and a 5% achievement gap between the groups in mathematics.

On the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), Escondido Charter High School (ECHS) showed performance in English Language Arts has remained above 90% for the past three years. Math rates for the CAHSEE showed a gain of nine points from 2005 to 2006 with 97% of sophomores passing the math portion of the first attempt.

SAT Scores for the past three years are shown below.

Indicator	2004	2005	2006
Percent of Grade 12 Students Taking the Test	20.7	27.7	37.0
Average Verbal Score	588	564	556
Average Math Score	532	556	539
Average Writing Score	---	---	539

The percentage of ECHS students taking the SAT has increased over the past three years. There was a decline in SAT scores from 2005 to 2006. Participation of juniors for the PSAT had steadily increased from 2003 to 2005 with test scores remaining stable.

The chart below reflects the percentage of students enrolled in courses required for UC and/or CSU admission. The data is for the ILP and TCP combined.

School Year	Percent of students Enrolled in courses required for UC and/or CSU Admission	Number of Graduates	Percent of graduates who have completed all courses required for UC and/or CSU admission
2005	65.7%	246	19%
2006	72.9%	290	35%

Escondido Charter High School carried out further analysis of the data. It was determined that 87% of students graduating from the TCP in 2006 completed all courses required for admission to a four year California university. While the number of graduates completing the university requirements appears low this may reflect the fact that the Individualized Learning Program (ILP) is a general level program.

The chart below reflects the dropout and graduation rates for ECHS from 2002-2005

Indicator	School		
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Dropout Rate (1 year)	5.3%	4.9%	1.9%
Graduation Rate	83.7%	78.6%	87.6%

The data indicates a steady decline in the dropout percentages and an increase in the graduation rate.

Escondido Charter High School has maintained a consistent level of enrollment. The school has made use of pre and post testing as well as skills assessments upon acceptance to the school combined with standardized (CST and CAHSEE) results for the purpose of enhancing instruction and to support student achievement.

Chapter III

Escondido Charter High School chose to use the same ESLRs they had worked with during the previous self-study process. The school meets the ESLRs through the curriculum and requirements of the Traditional Classroom Program (TCP) and the Individualized Learning Program (ILP). Each program is designed to provide students with course offerings, enrichment opportunities, and community experiences to help them achieve the ESLRs.

EXPECTED SCHOOLWIDE LEARNING RESULTS (ESLRs)

Escondido Charter High School's ESLRs were developed in 2001 during their first Self-Study process. All staff members reviewed the ESLRs during the Focus Group process. They continue to be a relevant vehicle by which to gauge student achievement.

Escondido Charter High School will prepare its graduates to be:

- 1. Academic Achievers who:**
 - Meet or exceed standardized test scores of the sponsoring public school district
 - Meet or exceed standards of essential knowledge as determined by standards set by Escondido Charter High School District and the state of California
- 2. Technologically Literate Individuals who:**
 - Demonstrates proficiency in the six basic computer skills; word processing; Internet search and retrieval; spreadsheet applications; e-mail; desktop publishing; and course requirements
 - Have the opportunity to demonstrate high standards in the use of advanced technology
 - Can apply technology across the curriculum and in the workplace
- 3. Effective Citizens who:**
 - Will register to vote
 - Have a basic understanding of the founding principles of our country as taught in our American Government class
 - Research current issues in order to make informed choices
 - Participate in community service activities
- 4. Effective Communicators who:**
 - Read and comprehend information including instructions, ballots, newspapers, employment or college application forms, and literary works
 - Demonstrate writing skills through reports, essays, letters, and creative writing assignments
 - Communicate clearly through oral presentations
- 5. Responsible, Self-Directed Adults who:**
 - Set priorities and achievable goals to create a positive future for themselves
 - Exhibit self-motivation and self-discipline, and accept responsibility
 - Develop knowledge and skills leading to productive employment
 - Manage relationships and diversity in a positive manner
 - Practice appropriate hygiene, proper nutrition, and physical fitness

Status of the School in Terms of Federal Guidelines

ECCHS does not accept federal funds. This includes Title I, Title II and all other federally funded Title programs. This was a conscious choice by the school's developers in order to minimize the "strings" and administrative costs associated with these programs.

ECCHS has made its federal Adequate Yearly Progress Goals (AYP) for the past three years, and has never been identified for Program Improvement. The school has not outside evaluators with the exception of the annual audit, which occurs in August. The school has never been subjected to a state audit and has neither corrective action nor a joint intervention agreement. There are no federally imposed deadlines of any kind.

Progress Report

Escondido Charter High School addressed each Critical Area of Improvement from the initial self-study.

- 1. The site administrator and staff develop and implement data gathering and disaggregation procedures to permit thorough data analyses and understanding of its relevance to curricular and teaching methodology adjustments.*

Escondido Charter High School (ECCHS) began by creating the position of District Coordinator for Assessment and Accountability. The Coordinator analyzes the results of standardized testing and the CAHSEE and works with a team to make curricular and/or instructional recommendations. These are shared with school leaders and presented to staff.

The above process was used and as a result of data analysis changes were made to the mathematics curriculum in the Individualized Learning Program (ILP). Additions were made to the curriculum to ensure all state standards were addressed; ILP modules for general level algebra and geometry were added to give them the foundation for passage of the math portion of the CAHSEE.

Data analyses resulted in changes to the science curriculum to augment the ILP Earth Science course to include lab based activities using "virtual labs."

Remediation programs were developed for students scoring below or far below basic on STAR tests. Students work in the Language Arts Center to work on deficient skill strands or the Math Center for math skills improvement.

2. The site administration and staff formalized and implement a two-way communication system to ensure all stakeholders are included in the operation and decision-making process.

Escondido Charter High School has expanded participation in weekly administrative meeting to include the District Coordinator responsible for testing, Student Support Services Manager, Athletic Director, Technology Director, and Maintenance Director. This has increased the number of people involved in high-level decision making. There are monthly staff meetings for the ILP and TCP staff to discuss curriculum, test results and other concerns.

Staff members utilize technology, e-mail, for intra-school communication. The ILP program uses a web page to post new course offerings and track upcoming events.

Communication with parents and students has also been changed. Progress reports and program information for TLP students is mailed every five weeks; transcripts are mailed twice a year; parents have access to daily emails for homework and Charter notes twice a week.

Individualized Learning Program families receive transcripts twice a year and grade reports upon course completion. ILP students and parents also receive direct communication with the Teacher of Record via letters, phone calls, emails, and parent conferences.

Parents participate in decision-making through the Parent Advisory Board. They plan student events, give directors feedback on scheduling and academics issues, and promote ECHS to the community.

3. The site administration and staff ensure the development and implementation of all ESLRs, indicators, academic standards and rubrics to assess individual student achievement.

Students participating in the Individualized Learning Program are monitored by the Teacher of Record to ensure that course standards are met and credits are earned. Student progress is communicated to parents and students on a regular basis via email and parent/student conferences. The ILP Teachers of Record also monitors student attendance.

Students enrolled in the Traditional Classroom Program (TCP) are provided with assessment using detailed progress reports and a final report each semester. The Student Services Manager (Counselor) counsels students having academic difficulty and meets with parents and maintains an academic folder for each student.

Escondido Charter High School is using a Senior ESLR rubric to evaluate all seniors in all five ESLR areas. The Microsoft Operating System (MOS) pre-test and post-test are used to evaluate student achievement in Technology (ESLR #2).

4. The site administration and staff implement a comprehensive system of support services for students including academic and personal counseling, job placements, internships, and community referrals.

Escondido Charter High School has a full-time Student Services Manager (SSM) who is the primary academic counselor for students and provides college information, SAT preparation and scholarship information.

The Teacher of Record (TOR) for ILP students is responsible for assisting 30 students with educational plans, sign-ups for college preparation programs, SAT registration, college applications and referrals.

The school has established the position of School Crisis Counselor to deal with the needs of students, parents and staff relating to mental health concerns for students. This counselor provides crises counseling and referrals for students and their families regarding prevention, threat intervention and drug and alcohol intervention.

Lack of funds currently means that ECHS is unable to provide job placement or internship services. The school requires all ILP students to take a Study Skills course where they take the Career Interest Inventory to help them identify occupational areas of interest. ILP and TCP students have access to choices career software to get detailed information on occupations and learn what colleges offer a related major.

Escondido Charter High School Special Education students have access to the WorkAbility programs. Job counselors meet with the students on site to assist them with resume working, interview practice job search techniques, and job placement.

Escondido Charter High School provides bulletin boards for job availability postings in the ILP building, the library, and the San Marcos campus. Teachers also receive email notification of new job postings.

Escondido Charter High School does not provide or plan to provide students with health services. The school maintains a community agency list that is used to refer students for services.

- 5. *The site administration and staff develop and implement a strategic plan to address the various facility needs of the school. This should include the identified need to expand course offerings and activities, and expand library and research opportunities.***

Escondido Charter High School moved to a new facility in August of 2003. The new campus consists of seven classroom buildings. The school has also begun construction of a Phase II building program that will provide a gymnasium, community theatre, and a warehouse. The new campus now has the needed library, lab rooms for mathematics, science, and technology courses, an art studio, and a soccer field.

The new library is equipped with six computers that students may use to complete assignments requiring word processing, conduct internet research, and access the library catalog. The library is also equipped with six laptop computers available for student check out. There are two TV/VCR/Tape recorder listening stations for student use.

- 6. *The site administration and staff develop and implement a staff development plan to:***

- *Assist teachers/staff to integrate technology and all courses*
- *Develop school-wide pre-test and post-tests for each course*
- *Provide training for teachers and staff in interventions for troubled students.*

Escondido Charter High School has integrated a technology component in to all courses in the ILP program since 2003. ILP students word process all papers; make use of the internet for research; math courses offerings are done as video lessons; the required Study Skills course has internet search components and a Child Development course utilizes a computer chipped doll to track “infant” care by students.

Many of the functions performed by ILP teachers are accomplished using technology. The ILP teachers conduct pre/post testing utilizing a computer database; enroll students in instructional modules through a web-based database; utilize email as the primary form of communication among staff; and use electronic files for record keeping.

The TCP program at Escondido Charter High School makes widespread use of technology. Teachers use email for parent/student communication; issue homework assignments via email and use software to generate attendance, grades and progress reports.

Escondido Charter High School TCP students conduct internet research in science and English classes to produce written reports and presentations. They also develop PowerPoint presentations.

Some other areas of integration of technology are:

- For art classes digital photography is used to catalog student art work
- US History students design World War II web page project
- Spanish class students create PowerPoint presentations

Escondido Charter High School has been utilizing pre and post testing since November, 2003 in all core subject (Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics) that allows for randomized questions and instantaneous scoring.

Escondido Charter High School created the position of School Crises Counselor in June, 2003. The position was created in response to the needs expressed by teachers and administrators relating to issues with students that they did not feel qualified to handle.

The School Crisis Counselor provided staff training in August, 2003. Procedures were outlined for various situations known to arise in a school setting. The School Crisis Counselor also acts as a resource for all staff members regarding behavioral and mental health issues of students.

7. Continue to explore ways to enfranchise all students as members of one of student body in regard to athletics, student leadership, yearbook and activities.

Escondido Charter High School has made efforts to “enfranchise” students as one student body. Once the new campus opened in the fall of 2003 the school athletic program grew to a program offering thirteen sports. The school began its first season of football as the ECHS White Tigers and will be a member of the Pacific League for the 2007-2008 school year. All athletic programs are open to students in the ILP and the TCP.

Escondido Charter High School restructured Associated Student Body (ASB) by combining the TCP ASB and the ILP Student Council. Despite the efforts of the school, there are continuing challenges attracting and retaining ILP students to serve on ASB. Classes such as yearbook continue to be open to students from both school programs. The school also no longer conducts separate activities or events. Escondido Charter High School is confident that the addition of the Community Theatre and gymnasium will further expand opportunities for all students.

Chapter 4

Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources.

A1. Vision and Purpose

To what extent a) does the school have a clearly stated vision or purpose based on its student needs, current educational research and belief that all students can achieve high levels and b) the school's purpose is supported by the governing board and the central administration and further defined by expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards?

The school's vision is embedded in its mission statement, which the stakeholders believe provides a model for student achievement. The mission statement outlines the commitment that ECHS has for its students and identifies parental participation as a key factor in promoting student success. Escondido Charter High School ensures that all students will receive an educational experience in which the teachers will implement a curriculum that emphasizes reading, writing, mathematics, and computer skills. This "back to the basics approach" is aligned with the school's ESLRs ensuring each ECHS student with the opportunity to become a self-directed, responsible citizen capable of successfully negotiating a changing technological landscape with the appropriate academic and communication skills. Learning will be sustained in a safe and orderly environment, while an appreciation for American Civilization and United States History will be accentuated.

The mission statement has been and continues to be the instrument that directs the policy decisions of ECHS. The school, its staff, parents and students take pride in maintaining a litter and graffiti free campus. ILP and TCP parents and guardians are integrally involved in their student's education and in school's decision-making process. Despite the opportunity for the stakeholders to revise the mission statement and ESLRs, both have remained relatively unchanged since 1996. This is due to the common belief that the mission statement and ESLRs are still applicable in meeting the needs of all students.

Academic achievement forms the foundation of the school's vision. The Executive Director routinely emphasizes this primary purpose and goal during staff meetings and in-service days. The pedagogical philosophy of Harry Wong – "backward lesson planning" – is discussed with and implemented by all new teachers. ESLR posters, that were designed by a student six years ago, are prominently displayed in almost all of the classrooms and offices.

ECHS has a variety of on-going activities and programs that support the ECHS vision. Those activities include the following:

- Regular public forums and planned meetings
- Back to School Night

- Academic Awards Assembly
- White Tiger Award Ceremony
- Curriculum that emphasizes communication
- Several delivery methods of mathematics instruction
- Community service and civic opportunities for students
- Student Parenting Program

Additional plans that are being considered include more opportunities to discuss, debate, and research current events in core subject areas; an elective course for the ILP students that addresses such life skills as resume writing and interviewing techniques; upgrading the functional applications of the website – grades and assignments on line; and doing more to incorporate student voices into policy decisions.

A2: Governance

To what extent does the governing board a) have policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school’s purpose and support the achievement of the expected school-wide learning results and academic standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school; b) The governing board delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and c) regularly monitors the results of these policies?

The ECHS Board of Directors is governed by written policies that provide oversight and decision-making authority without micromanaging the day-to-day activities of the students and staff. Five community members and two staff members comprise the Board of Directors. An ASB appointed student representative attends all regularly scheduled meetings and serves as a liaison between the Board and the students.

Monthly board meetings are held in open and closed sessions in order to conduct the business at hand, which includes the following:

- Academic achievement
- Financial status
- Policy decisions
- Contracts
- Textbooks,
- Expenditures
- Complaints and grievances

The Executive Director relays additional discussion items that arise from the weekly leadership team meetings to the Board. The community, parent, and student involvement and attendance at the Board meetings is minimal despite an array of public notices. Interviews with the staff indicate that the governing board provides the necessary support to achieve the school’s stated objectives.

A3: Leadership and Staff

To what extent based on student achievement data, does the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the expected school-wide learning results and academic standards? B) To what extent does the school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single school-wide action plan based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with the students' needs?

As a charter school, ECHS is not required to have a Single Plan for Student Achievement. However, ECHS depends upon student achievement data – results and trends - to drive the decision-making. The school has also used the findings from the previous WASC visit, their own assessment methods (pre and post-testing for particular core subjects), and the state reported data to refine and improve their practices.

The school has a broad-based and collaborative means of gathering input from all stakeholders concerning student achievement. Frequent staff meetings allow time for communication and feedback between the teachers and program directors. The central administration routinely reviews student achievement by grade and subject matter in order to determine areas of need. A Testing Coordinator presents annual testing data comparing it to previous years and other local schools.

The Testing Coordinator also identifies students scoring Below Basic or Far Below Basic on standardized tests in core areas – English-Language Arts and General Mathematics. These students are referred to the program directors for placement in appropriate remediation programs, which include literacy intervention, ILP Study Hall, and meetings with a TCP counselor.

To strengthen the school's philosophy of academic achievement, it has instituted a minimum extra-curricular grade point average of 2.5. Data driven decisions such as the adoption of new social science and science textbooks and significant technology investments indicate the school's response to allocating resources to areas that have been determined to be in need.

The school is considering the following as a means of refining and improving areas of concern that have been identified as a result of data analysis:

- Development of validated and consistent remediation opportunities for struggling students
- Implement unified pre and post testing system that is aligned with the objectives of all courses
- Improve home to school communication by developing teacher home pages
- Create online – parent and student portal – that will allow for individual education updates

A4: Qualified Staff

To what extent does a qualified staff facilitate achievement of the academic standards and expected school-wide learning results through a system of preparation, induction, and on-going professional development?

ECHS strives to put its money where its mission is: to improve pupil learning. Thus, ECHS utilizes hiring practices that attract NCLB qualified teachers with diverse backgrounds and career experiences. All new teachers go through an induction process that provides them with some necessary tools and support to help them succeed in their positions. The school atmosphere encourages ongoing professional development, as does the consistent evaluation process. Recently ECHS has started using professional development folders as a way to systematically encourage and monitor professional development activities.

In order to guard against teacher complacency, teachers are hired and remain on an “at-will” contract. The school awards merit bonuses to those teachers who have demonstrated exemplary performance. Applicants undergo a thorough screening process. Those selected for an interview meet with the Program Director, Mentor Teacher, and two or three respected teachers. The most qualified candidate meets with the Executive Director and Business Manager to start the induction process and sign the appropriate paper work. Some teachers, depending on their credentials, may be able to “cross over” between the Independent Learning Program and Traditional Classroom Program.

Internal communication and planning among teachers is conducted via networked computers, ILP bi-weekly meetings, TCP monthly staff meetings, and during a number of staff development days throughout the year. These activities along with linking new teachers and a mentor teacher ensure the opportunity to collaborate and share best practices.

ECHS hopes to develop and implement the following plans:

- Create additional collaboration opportunities for the ILP and TCP teachers
- Include the administrators in the performance review process
- Using a kiosk to advertise and promote vocational and ROP courses among the students and teachers
- Develop innovative mathematics instruction in basic through advanced skills relative to demand
- Increase the knowledge of teachers by offering training in the areas of the college application process, career, and vocational options.

A5: Ongoing Professional Development

To what extent is leadership and staff involved in ongoing research or data-based correlated professional development that focuses on identified student learning?

The school is in the process of developing formal professional development based upon research and student learning needs. ECHS has come to realize a structured program to ensure the desired professional development growth for its teachers is needed. The school has purchased tutorial videos that teachers may use to acquire new skills and subject matter competence. The Program Directors are reviewing each teacher's professional development folder each year to monitor progress, discuss goals, and to consider a plan for the future.

With the addition of a Professional Development Coordinator, ECHS will be able to address this concern, as well as those identified below:

- Create incentives to encourage teachers to further their education or hold supplemental credentials
- Develop a method for communicating existing off campus staff development opportunities to all teachers
- Implement in-house professional development by motivating teachers to share their content knowledge and pedagogical skills with their colleagues.
- Utilize a unified pre and post testing system to generate more meaningful analyses of data

A6: Resources

To what extent are the human, material, physical, and financial resources sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected school-wide learning results?

The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and school-wide learning results.

The financial revenue available to ECHS has been well managed, resulting in the following improved student services; a well-maintained facility; generous resources; smaller class size; technology funding; and unlimited access to several copying stations. A collaborative decision-making process exists between the staff and school leadership regarding resource allocation. The Executive Director provides a financial status report and projected budget each spring.

Compared to its sponsoring district, ECHS spends more ADA proceeds in the classroom, believing such investments will positively effect student achievement. In the 2005-2006 academic year ECHS spent more than \$80,000 on new computers and monitors for the

computer labs, while \$83,000 was used to purchase new textbooks in the perceived areas of need – Social Science and Science. Although the veteran teacher salaries at ECHS are less than the sponsoring district, the beginning teacher salary is higher. This has allowed ECHS to attract many highly qualified candidates.

There are several areas that ECHS should consider in its future financial plans. Those areas include the alignment of all ECHS curriculum to the California content standards; acquisition of English Language Arts textbooks even though the testing data demonstrates proficiency; development of an effective online curriculum similar to the digital academy at their sister school – Heritage K-8

A7: Fiscal Operations

To what extent has the charter school's governing authority and the school leadership executed responsible resource planning for the future? Is the charter school fiscally solvent, and does it use sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health and reporting)?

Escondido Charter High School is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation that is held under the umbrella of the American Heritage Education Foundation (AEHF). ECHS's primary sources of revenue are Average Daily Attendance, the Charter School categorical block grant, and donations. Its 2006-2007 revenue budget is approximately \$6.8 million. Ten years of continued growth have resulted in a fiscal solvency. The "real assets" held under the umbrella of the AHEF are valued at more than \$35 million including buildings and land on both campuses and its commercial rental property.

On June 20, 2006, ECSD completed the sale of Qualified Institutional Bonds for approximately \$26 million. The bond sale allowed the district to pay off the original private bonds used to build a new campus, as well as lower its repayment interest rate and monthly payments, while setting aside \$8 million for the construction of a community theatre, gymnasium, and warehouse.

Regular accounting procedures utilizing the California School Accounting Manual (CSAM) and external audit process are in place. The Business manager monitors the income and expenses and delivers a monthly report to the ECHS Board of Directors. Adequate compensation, staffing, and reserves (ECHS maintains 5%) have produced a 4.23% COLA for the 2006-2007 school year; a \$453 per month benefits stipend; a less than 20:1 TCP class size; a class load of 30:1 for the ILP teachers; and sufficient classroom supplies – paper, pencils, pens, etc.

The solvency of ECHS has extended to its sister school, Heritage K-8, and has allowed for funding to support an athletic budget of \$20,000 per year. A self-sustaining football program and cheerleading squad have been supported through donations and fundraising efforts.

A8: Fiscal Operations

Has the charter school developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards?

ECHS has written and board-adopted policies and procedures, which include the following: petty cash, purchasing, revolving fund, use of school credit cards, reimbursement, ASB accounts, fundraising, and audit requirements. An external audit by a CPA firm is conducted twice a year. To date, there have been no audit exceptions or deficiencies to report. Each March, the Board receives a preliminary budget based on projected funding rates for the following year. The budget is refined and resubmitted several times and is finally passed by the board in June in accordance with state law.

Areas of Strength:

- The administration is highly respected by the entire school community and provides outstanding support for a high quality instructional program.
- The ECHS vision is embedded in its mission statement and drives student achievement.
- The school provides a range of activities and programs to support ECHS vision.
- ECHS has a governing board that provides the support needed for the school to achieve the stated objectives.
- The school regularly makes use of student achievement data from various sources to refine and improve best practices.
- The school makes use of data to determine support for student achievement through the use of remediation programs, placement for literacy intervention, ILP Study Hall, and TCP Student Services Manager meetings.
- ECHS makes efforts to attract and select teachers with diverse backgrounds and career experiences that are NCLB qualified.
- The school has available instructional tutorials related to development of new teaching strategies and subject matter competency.
- ECHS makes use of administrative-directed professional portfolios designed to promote teacher effectiveness.
- Administration annually reviews and monitors the personal professional growth plans for the teaching staff.
- The school provides opportunities for the teaching staff to take advantage of online courses related to pedagogy and methodology.
- ECHS makes effective use of available resources that support a strong, effective academic program.
- The school manages resources that support a new state-of-the-art facility that includes technology and small class size, which positively affects school climate.
- ECSD operates a school that is fiscally solvent using ethical accounting practices.
- ECSD secured private bonds to finance a gymnasium, a community performing arts center, and a warehouse.

Areas for Growth:

- ECHS is encouraged to continue to develop the school website to allow greater parent access to student information including graduation status, class grades, and weekly assignments.
- The school is encouraged to expand collaboration opportunities for ILP and TCP teachers.
- ECHS is encouraged to expand career information availability for TCP students.
- The school is encouraged to increase the knowledge of ILP teachers by offering training in the areas of college application process and career and vocational options.
- ECHS is encouraged to formalize teacher collaboration within departments, and across departments and grade levels.
- The school is encouraged to continue to analyze student data leading to a formalized professional development plan that is tied to the school's identified needs.
- ECHS is encouraged to continue purchasing new textbooks in core curricular areas assuring alignment to state standards.

Standards Based Student Learning: Curriculum

B1. What Students Learn

To what extent does the school provide a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the expected school-wide learning results through successful completion of any course of study offered?

The school teaches a rigorous curriculum with many courses aligned to State Standards. The school is to be commended for holding students to a high standard especially in the TCP program. The school requires that the college preparatory students complete three years of math and three years of science. They also hold their athletes to a high standard, insisting that they maintain a 2.5 GPA in order to maintain eligibility. All students must complete 10 credits of technology at a minimum with Advanced Academic Diploma candidates needing 20 credits.

The school also offers relevant coursework in technology including digital video editing, digital photography, web page design, computer programming and animation. They also include topical issues in the curriculum for various courses including a focus on grammar and writing in foreign language, real life math questions in consumer math, upgrades in child development, and the encouragement of American government students to volunteer at polling places during elections.

B2. How Students Learn

To what extent do all students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and school to career goals?

The school offers a Traditional Classroom Program, an Individualized Learning Program and a blended program, which allows ILP student access to the TCP. Given the inherent flexibility of these two programs, it appears that students' learning opportunities are being met. Both groups of students have access to a core curriculum plus some remedial courses and honors level classes. Many students enroll in community college with courses being offered for college and high school credit. TCP students develop an individual graduation plan with a career component, while the ILP students have individual education plans. Special education is offered under an agreement with the neighboring school district and remediation for the CAHSEE and other remedial needs are being met on an as needed basis.

B3. How Assessment Is Used

To what extent are students able to meet all the requirements of graduation upon completion of the high school program?

For TCP students, the school provides students with the assistance of the Student Services Manager to help all students develop and execute a plan leading to graduation. For ILP students many services related to assistance in graduation are provided. The Teacher of Record serves as the student's academic advisor. Parents receive regular updates regarding student progress and any issues that might put the student in jeopardy of not graduating. The Registrar provides annual grad checks in January to update student academic progress. This information is available to both students and parents. The ILP students also receive remedial assistance as needed to help them in all academic areas. Those on probation are assigned a study hall to receive assistance as needed. The TCP students are assigned to the Homework Club if their grades fall below a 2.0 GPA.

Areas of Strength:

- ECHS uses effective analysis of data leading to an ongoing review of the math curriculum.
- The school plans to continue training teachers in the San Marcos Writing Project.
- ECHS is building a new theater, which should increase participation in the arts.
- The school is creating a new Music Appreciation course aligned to state standards.
- The school is developing a Life Skills course for the ILP students.
- ECHS is developing a new writing program.
- ECHS is creating a new college prep credit plan for the ILP student.
- The school is using a study hall period to assist students who may need remediation assistance including work on the CAHSEE.
- ECHS is providing multiple ways of offering assistance to the ILP students for graduation planning and remediation as needed.
- The school aligned TCP curriculum to state standards.

Areas for Growth:

- ECHS is encouraged to continue alignment of all courses in the ILP to state standards.
- The school is encouraged to increase the sharing of information about curriculum and instruction based on individual teacher knowledge and expertise.
- The school is encouraged to consider ways to support ILP teachers with training to provide advisement for career and vocational information.

Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction

C1. Challenging Learning Experiences

To what extent are all students involved in challenging learning experiences to achieve the academic standards and the expected school-wide learning results?

Students at ECHS have a variety of instructional programs from which to earn credits towards graduation, including: classroom program, individualized instruction, math and computer labs, modules (small group classes), community college, and regional occupation program (ROP) classes.

All students in the Individualized Learning Program (ILP) receive one hour of individualized instruction with a credentialed Teacher of Record once each week. Through oral validation of the material studied, the teacher engages the student in discussion and questions that engage critical thinking skills.

ILP freshmen and students with poor writing skills complete a module that focuses on writing. Skills are developed which enable students to accomplish high school writing tasks such as various types of essays, business letters, and responses to literature.

ILP students use the Future Schools computer program in the Math Center as the basis for self-paced instruction with supplementary assistance by on-site instructors.

World Geography students use Internet sources to research cultural characteristics and current events to provide a “three dimensional” understanding of countries under study. They also use aspects of *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman to analyze the country as an evolving political and economical entity in the global community.

TCP departments include computer research in various assignments to enhance student learning, such as: English preparatory research into the historical and geographical background before reading a novel; reliance on Internet sources for biographical essays; and research on government and economics systems in Social Sciences.

TCP English teachers assess individual student writing skills using a specific rubric. The information gained from these assessments is used to identify student writing levels (i.e. 9th, 10th, 11th, etc.) and as a guide in planning instruction.

Students in the TCP remedial English program use a checklist to identify different types of sentences and to evaluate their own work.

All students may take challenging technology courses, including basic computer software skills, digital photography, and web page design.

C2. Instructional Strategies

To what extent do all teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom, that actively engages students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and help them succeed at high levels?

ILP advanced courses provide in-depth learning in specific topics of student interest: Digital Photography and Video (blended program), Pre-Calculus (Math Center), Psychology, and Street Law.

ILP Teachers of Record routinely use the Socratic method to expand a student's knowledge through discussion and association of related subjects.

ILP teachers frequently expand the course of curriculum beyond the textbooks and the packets. For example, one ILP teacher requires her students to create and "sell" a realistic business plan as a final project for the Economics course.

TCP English students complete a researched argument paper that requires the synthesis of several choices in which students exercise critical thinking skills in evaluating the usefulness of the source for purpose and audience.

Each TCP World Geography student conducts Internet research on two modern cities to determine the influence of the five themes of geography on their populations.

Sophomores in TCP World History, English, and Computer classes complete research on a genocide topic in one project that utilizes resources from all three classes to produce a research paper and presentation; the project includes a field trip to Holocaust Museum when funds allow.

TCP Computer students use their knowledge to create an appropriate portfolio (logo, business cards, stationery, etc.) for a local business.

TCP Chemistry and Physics (H) courses require students to use the college/professional format for lab reports.

All TCP seniors are required to complete a senior exhibition, which further prepares them for post-secondary education and the career world.

The TCP "Saxon Day" event each fall features a one-hour program of original music, skits, and poetry created by students that focuses on mathematics.

Students participate in Oceanography and Biology II field trips to local aquariums and tide pools to observe living examples of organisms and systems described in class.

The Student Services Manager and TCP teachers provide classes on awareness and applications of study skills techniques for freshmen during the first weeks of the fall semester, specifically in memorization, note-taking, textbook reading, and using planners. A course in Practical Accounting is offered during the fall semester after school.

Students completing the course receive a certificate and learn skills that qualify them for a basic bookkeeping job.

Annual trips to European countries, primarily Germany and Eastern Europe, enhance student understanding of foreign languages, cultures, geography, and economies.

TCP students with less than a 2.0 GPA on their progress reports are assigned to the Homework Club for one hour, three times per week, during the next grading period. A teacher is present to verify their current homework assignments from computer files generated by the subject teachers, and to assist the students with their homework assignments. Students who need remedial help in math are excused to attend tutorials with their respective math teachers.

Areas of Strength:

- ECHS has high academic expectations for both the TCP and ILP students through high standards for all students.
- The school has a well-qualified, dedicated staff.
- ECHS provides a variety of programs to meet student needs.
- The school has a Homework Club, tutorials, and other supports to enhance student learning.
- The school has developed a website that provides the staff, students, parents, and community information about the school.

Areas for Growth:

- The school is encouraged to provide more computer class options for ILP students, especially in the area of research.
- ECHS is encouraged to develop a system that utilizes all available resources to enhance the students' college-level research skills.

Standards Based Student Learning: Assessment And Accountability

D1. Reporting Student Performance

To what extent does the school use a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other shareholders of the community.

ECHS uses standardized testing data to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance to parents and other community members. This includes the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR) that is comprised of the California Standard Tests (CST's). The District Coordinator, with the aid of an outside data consultant, disaggregates and analyzes STAR scores data by both subject and program. Additionally each Spring the Executive Director presents the summary of the SARC (School Accountability Report Card) to the Board of Trustees of the sponsoring District at a public meeting with school leaders present to answer questions. Additionally, SARC, CAHSEE and STAR results are reported to the community via CDE and ECHS websites, the local newspaper and other easily accessible websites such as Great Schools. PowerPoint presentations are used to inform the current staff as well as the Parent Advisory Board of the school's most recent significant data inclusive of both the TCP (Traditional Classroom Program) and ILP (Individualized Learning Program). Parents are mailed individual student test reports. Progress reports are mailed monthly and separate individual files are kept on all students and are open to students, staff, and parents for discussion and review. TCP and ILP teachers use Grade Quick (a technology-based system) for reporting and recording all assessment information and attendance.

D2. Assessment Strategies

To what extent do teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning

ECHS reports that teachers use a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning. TCP teachers employ a variety of strategies both individually and in departmental work to improve student learning. Strategies reported include homework, quizzes, tests, portfolios, oral validations and presentations, computer based pre and post tests in some subjects, Senior Projects, and various technological demonstrations such as PowerPoint and Writing Weakness logs. ILP teachers conduct oral discussions of course material weekly to validate student retention and learning. Traditional assessments such as mastery tests are exclusively used in both the TCP and ILP math programs. ILP student performance success is based on successful completion of packets and course work combined with oral validation of content mastery. Students must pass a post test with 70% or better to receive credit. Individual files are kept on each student containing updated course assessments and standardized testing assessment data.

To what extent do students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student?

ILP student performance success and credit is based on completion of packets/courses combined with oral validation of content mastery along with a 70% or better on post-tests. Teachers in both TCP and ILP programs request student feedback and adjust material and delivery based on verbal feedback. Students in English classes record teacher's comments in a writing weakness log for reflection, revision and improvement on future essays. Teachers report that they use daily student feedback (English, Science, Social Science, and ILP) to determine how to monitor and teach the next lesson. IEP meetings are also in place to utilize student feedback as an integral indicator of learning success for special education students.

D3. Assessment and Monitoring System

To what extent does the school with the support of the district and community have an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected school-wide learning results?

All incoming ECHS students are administered intake tests to measure readiness for Algebra 1 as well as approximate reading grade level. Baseline student performance on these intake tests is measured through computer based and written assessments. These results are used to determine proper placement and program. Achievement testing is used in the TCP program to determine placement in advanced classes, while the math results are used to determine proper level placement in either the TCP or ILP programs. School records from prior schools do not determine placement. Instead, all ECHS students who enroll must demonstrate mastery of material to determine appropriate course placement and/or credit. Traditional and authentic assessments are used throughout all instruction including unit tests, projects, midterms, portfolios, cooperative learning, final tests etc. Authentic assessment tools are more prevalent in the TCP program. STAR test results and CAHSEE results are both used to identify students who are in need of placement change and/or remediation. 98% participation on both tests has resulted in solid data needed to determine both individual program and student needs.

D4. Assessment-Driven Programs

To what extent does the assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards and the expected school-wide learning results drive the school's program, its regular evaluation and improvement and usage of resources?

CAHSEE and STAR results have stimulated school-wide concerns, departmental and school wide discussions and corrective actions in both the organization and curriculum of the math program. The TCP writing curriculum has been revised with more formalized rubrics. ILP standardized test results in English composition has resulted in English 9A as a writing module. Algebra 1 and Geometry courses are now offered in a module format with more teacher interaction and a defined timetable for new course completion. Textbook replacement and curriculum upgrade has begun in Earth Science and World History by teachers.

Areas of Strength:

- ECHS utilizes effective disaggregation and analysis of standardized test data (STAR, CST, CAHSEE) as well as school-wide data.
- The school effectively communicates test data results with the school-wide community.
- The school utilizes a variety of strategies to effectively evaluate student learning in both the TCP and ILP programs.
- ECHS has a well-developed math lab and modules to deliver effective curriculum for ILP students and provide remediation for TCP students.
- ECHS recognizes the need for the overall improvement of writing skills for all students.
- The school's analysis of data has resulted in the focus on improvement of mathematics instruction.

Areas of Growth:

- ECHS is encouraged to continue to analyze and use data for overall school improvement.
- The school is encouraged to continue to identify essential standards in core curricular areas.
- The school is encouraged to continue to align textbooks and course packets to state standards in ILP program.
- ECHS is encouraged to continue its relationship with San Diego County Office of Education for an improved school information system.
- The school is encouraged to continue curriculum alignment with state standards including pre and post testing and packet course work for ILP students.

School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

E1. Parent and Community Involvement

To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement, especially with the teaching and learning process?

Escondido Charter High School developed ways to encourage parent and community involvement by employing several strategies.

- The school hosts an Open House/Back to School Night.
- ECHS uses a bulletin called Charter Notes to inform parents, students, and staff of school events, deadlines, and enrichment opportunities, and is posted online twice a week.
- Annual student and parent surveys are conducted to gain feedback on instruction, curriculum, and support services.
- Students have the opportunity to take courses in foreign language, lab science, and fine arts at local Palomar Community College.
- Parents & community members serve as athletic coaches.
- ECHS cultivates business partnerships as a member of the East Valley Business Association.
- ECHS hosts motivational speakers from the community.
- Progress reports are mailed every five weeks for the TCP program; credit completion slips are distributed for ILP students upon course completion; and transcripts are mailed home twice a year. Parents are provided written notification of standardized tests and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

E2. School Environment

To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning?

Escondido Charter High School is a safe, clean and orderly environment. All students enter school through one entrance and are greeted by administrative staff. The school employs a full-time security guard to maintain a closed campus and monitor for the presence of unwanted visitors. Students are provided a student handbook that defines conduct guidelines, the dress code, and information on zero tolerance for physical violence, weapons and controlled substances.

To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?

Escondido Charter High School has set high expectations for students through the following:

- Requiring a minimum 2.0 GPA for graduation
- Requiring a minimum 2.5 GPA to participate in athletics
- Offering twelve honors & AP courses
- Requiring Traditional Classroom Program students to complete four hours of community service per semester

Escondido Charter High School cultivates an atmosphere of trust, respect, and professionalism. Students are known by name by the Director, Student Services Manager and most other staff members. Staff recognition occurs at monthly staff meetings, and staff milestones are acknowledged and celebrated. Administrators have an open door policy.

E3-4. Student Support

To what extent do all students receive appropriate support along with an individualized learning plan to help ensure academic success?

To what extent do students have access to a system of personal support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community?

Escondido Charter High School provides two academic programs to facilitate student learning, the Traditional Classroom Program (TCP) and the Individualized Learning Program (ILP). The school offers three diploma plans to assist students in meeting graduation requirements. All students have individualized learning plans that are monitored by their Teacher of Record (ILP) or Student Services Manager (TCP), which provides assistance and intervention as needed.

ECHS requires that all students earning below a 2.0 GPA attend the Homework Club (TCP) or Probationary Study Hall (ILP), which are structured programs designed to provide accountability and support to increase student achievement. The school provides tutorial assistance after school for TCP students and by appointment for ILP students. ECHS works with Escondido Union High School District to provide services to students with disabilities and the Special Education Coordinator and a district Program Specialist monitor the progress of students with disabilities and provide academic support for students, their parents and their teachers.

Escondido Charter High School has a number of campus clubs and athletic programs available to students. The school encourages community participation through programs like Youth and Government and Helping Hands as well as involvement in philanthropic causes like Relay for Life, Red Cross Blood Drive, and Operation Home Front. ECHS students are encouraged to enter community art, photography and dance competitions. The foreign language and science departments also sponsor opportunities for student travel abroad.

Areas of Strength:

- ECHS maintains effective communication with parents regarding events and academic progress.
- ECHS has a Parent Advisory Board that encourages parents to be involved in planning and decision-making processes.
- The school uses an annual parent survey to collect data in several domains for program improvement.
- The school encourages the use of the local community colleges for a variety of classes and higher learning experiences.
- The school has developed extensive relationships with community organizations and businesses to enhance educational opportunities.
- ECHS has established policies and procedures that ensure student safety and a positive campus environment.
- The school has systems that promote and recognize student and staff achievement.
- ECHS has developed a variety of supports for under-achieving students.
- The school has made great gains in providing extra-curricular, athletic, and community involvement opportunities for students.
- The ECHS administrative and maintenance staffs work hard to maintain a clean and orderly campus.

Areas for Growth:

- The school is encouraged to continue to design and develop literacy support programs.
- ECHS is encouraged to provide stronger support regarding non-college bound students (i.e. military branches, vocational programs, etc.).
- The school is encouraged to continue to provide opportunities for and encourage participation of ILP students in all school extra-curricular activities.

Chapter 5

Ongoing School Improvement

The school's original action plan was developed as part of the self-study process. In January 2007 Escondido Charter High School (ECHS) needed to modify the plan contained in the self-study and provided the Visiting Committee with a revised plan upon their arrival at the site. The three components of the Action Plan and rationales are:

1. Improve mathematics achievement of all students.

Rationale: Self-study findings indicate a critical need to improve student achievement in mathematics at all grade levels, including the mastery of foundational skills prior to enrolling in Algebra I and higher. Assessment data, intake scores, and discussions with stakeholders support this need.

2. Align all curricula to State Content Standards in order to improve student achievement.

Rationale: Self-study findings indicate a critical need in that not all curricula, especially ILP, are aligned to the California Content Standards. This could lower student achievement on state-mandated tests. In addition, if the curriculum is not aligned, then the standardized tests do not accurately measure student achievement.

3. Develop and maintain an effective literacy improvement program for students.

Rationale: Self-study findings indicate the need for a structured literacy improvement program for students who are reading significantly below grade level, especially in ILP. Although similar programs have been implemented in the past, they have not endured due to a combination of poor attendance, high student turnover, and excessive overhead costs. Therefore, our growth targets and action plan for this goal will be short term until the effectiveness of a pilot program can be assessed.

The Visiting Committee concurs with the Action Plan developed by the school as a validation of the needs for school improvement. The revision of the previous Action Plan indicates that the school will continue to monitor student achievement with data analysis and make modifications to the Action Plan as they become necessary.

The follow-up process the school intends to use to monitor and accomplish the school-wide Action Plan appears to be adequate. The school's leadership team will be the facilitating body.

In summary, the school is looking forward to working on its plan to improve student achievement and increasing student learning with respect to the expected school-wide learning results.

SCHOOL – WIDE

School-Wide Areas of Strength:

- The ECHS vision and mission statements have created an atmosphere resulting in high student achievement. The entire school community reflects positive statements of support, trust, confidence, and loyalty towards its students, teachers, parents, and administration.
- ECHS operates school facilities and programs that are financially sound and successfully implemented.
- The school has done an excellent analysis to date of recent student performance data as reflected by curricular improvement and exceptional student achievement.

School-Wide Areas for Growth:

- ECHS is encouraged to continue to examine areas of improvement in student achievement through standards-based instructional strategies.
- ECHS is encouraged to develop a more structured professional development program that directly reflects the school's data analysis.